DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 235 952 RC 014 387

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TITLE Psychological Perspectives in Second Language Development.
INSTITUTION California State Univ., Fresno. School of Education.
PUB DATE Oct 83
NOTE 15p.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Bilingual Education; Cognitive Development; Elementary Education; *English (Second Language; *Language Proficiency; *Limited English Speaking; *Non English Speaking; Psychology; *Second Language Instruction; Second Language Learning; Teacher Role; *Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS Integrated Concept Language Development Approach; Natural Approach (Languages); Stimulus Response Reinforcement Approach

ABSTRACT

Four commonly used approaches to teaching English as a second language to limited English proficiency and non-English proficiency students have both advantages and disadvantages. The Natural Approach is based on children's acquisition of speech sounds and oral proficiency through spontaneous interaction in a natural environment. Although a natural environment is hard to duplicate in the classroom, teachers can approximate a natural setting with objects, plants, and stimuli corresponding to the children's developmental stages. The Stimulus-Response-Reinforcement Approach involves a structured and sequenced series of lessons enabling the teacher to model increasingly complex language elements. The teacher uses audio-visual aids and gestures as stimuli to elicit responses and extend immediate reinforcement. Critics call the approach structured, mechanical, and restrictive of natural oral expression. Advocates think it ensures appropriate second language progession and reduces frustration. The Integrated Concept-Language Development Approach helps students learn concepts concurrently with language. Although the teacher must maintain a balance between concept and language learning, the approach aids development in both areas. In the Eclectic Approach teachers who prefer a non-structured plan and are willing to plan carefully, select and apply elements of the other approaches to second language learning. (SB)

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PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

IN SECOND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

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RC014387

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October 1983

Psychological Perspectives in Second Language Development

Introduction

English-as-a-second language (ESL) programs are offered in numerous classrooms as means for preparing limited English proficiency students (LEPS) and non-English proficiency students (NEPS) for interaction and instructional activities in English-monolingual curricula. Some schools include ESL provisions with little or no reference to the first language of the student. Other schools, particularly those receiving Title VII, ESEA federal bilingual education grants or state bilingual education funds, afford instruction via the first language of the student until he/she is ready to receive full instruction in English. Undoubtedly, the ESL approaches or variations of the plans, described in this essay, are found in non-bilingual programs and bilingual education programs throughout the nation. These plans are herein presented for ESL and bilingual education teachers to review and consider for enhancing both the language proficiency and cognitive repertoire of limited English proficiency students and non-English proficiency students in their respective classrooms.

Several instructional approaches are found in developing the English communication skills of limited-English speakers and non-English proficiency students in the United States. Different titles have been used in representing the various instructional approaches in second language development for these types of learners. Since titles such as "Audio-Lingual Approach," "Oral

Language Program," or "The S-R-R Approach in Second Language Instruction" may incorporate, in varying degrees, similar instructional features and emphases, it behooves writers on the subject to explicate the underlying rationale for the various strategies and titles in their respective essays. For the purpose of this paper, the titles "Natural Approach," "Behavioristic" or "Stimulus-Response-Reinforcement Approach," and "Integrated Concept-Language Development Plan" reflect three alternative instructional modes in English-second-language development. In partial reference to these instructional alternatives, one will find teachers who choose to be more eclectic in orientation and, therefore, employ a combination of the three types.

This paper provides a description of the aforementioned second-language instructional plans, including some of the most favorable aspects and questionable features of each. Although the title of the paper gives particular reference to psychological perspectives relative to English-second-language approaches, it does not preclude the application of these psychological principles to learning other languages--i.e., Spanish-as-a-second language for English monolinguals.

The Natural Approach

The "Natural Approach" in second language development underscores the notion that children acquire speech sounds and oral proficiency in the first language through spontaneous interaction

in a natural environment. In essence, it suggests that children interact naturally and spontaneously with accessible persons, phenomena and other animated things in their cultural milieu. Moreover, it implies that children are more likely to interact in particular ways and varying degrees of frequency with significant persons, manipulative objects, and other living organisms that correspond to their current stage of development.

Significant persons in the child's immediate environment, i.e., parents, siblings, and grandparents, serve as mediators in assisting the child in acquiring oral proficiency in the first language. These interventions are not necessarily pre-determined or scheduled for the child, because objects, phenomena and speech sounds appear naturally in the child's environment. In turn, the child acts upon them in terms of his/her own volition. Invariably, however, significant persons in the home environment purposely place manipulative objects within reach of the child. For example, the mother and siblings place animated or manipulative objects that will elicit reactions from the child. While in the very early stages of development the child may not fully understand oral suggestions such as, "Here, Anthony, play with the pretty, red rattle," the child, nonetheless, will be motivated to reach for a colorful-moving object presented to him/her, coupled with affective utterences from the mother. In this respect, the interactive features in the natural environment contribute to the child's progressive stages, i.e., the "babbling stage," the "jargon period," the "holophrastic stage," the "word formation period,"

and the "phrase/sentence construction period."*

The "Natural Approach" in the classroom should be arranged to allow for the progressive development of language skills through unstructured and unplanned activities. In this setting the teacher simply serves as a facilitator--she/he permits children to explore and to interact freely with objects and persons around them. On the other hand, one of the shortcomings in this approach is the possibility that some more advanced and refined communication skills may be left unattended. For this reason, some intervention by teachers is needed to ensure that children are given an opportunity to practice and develop all of the important components in language development.

While the "Natural Approach" appears to be effective in furthering the first language of the child in the home environment, it is highly unlikely that the same type of environment can be duplicated in the classroom for the child who is acquiring a second language. By their very nature, second language activities cannot completely replace the child's native language environment. In this regard, some advocates of the "Natural Approach" propose a silent period to allow time for children to acquire some comprehension of the language (T. D. Terrell, 1981). Yet, since this approach does not necessarily provide scheduled and sequenced presentations of words and phrases for ensuring progressive advancement in language comprehension, the readiness level for undertaking

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*For a detailed description of the different periods of language acquisition in early childhood development, see Language, Learning, and Cognitive Processes by Francis J. DiVesta, Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, Monterey, California, 1974, pp. 46-57.

productive speech will, undoubtedly, vary among the children. Nonetheless, the teacher can create instructional arrangements consisting of objects, plants, animated things, animals, insects, pictorials, charts, music, and other facilitating features that correspond to the child's period of development. It is in this sense that a classroom environment may approximate a natural setting for children to acquire first and second language capabilities, as well as to allow opportunities for them to experiment with a variety of cognitive processes.

The Stimulus-Response-Reinforcement Approach

The "Stimulus-Response-Reinforcement-Approach" is found in numerous English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) programs. Several oral language programs, i.e., the H-200 ESL series initially designed at the University of California, Los Angeles, under the direction of Robert Wilson, and the English Oral Language Program (OLP), developed at the Southwestern Cooperative Educational Laboratory, Albuquerque, New Mexico, are based on this approach (Valencia, 1978).

The "S-R-R Approach" usually follows a structured and sequenced series of lessons, which enables the teacher to progress from modeling sounds and words to more advanced phrases and sentences. While the teacher is the most important medium for modeling sounds, the program can include a variety of audio/visual aids (audio tapes, pictorials, cards, charts, slides, etc.) for associating meanings to words and phrases.

Invariably, ESL-OLP approaches are designed with little or no reference to the child's first language. In addition to visual and audio aids, the teacher uses particular types of gestures for eliciting responses from the children. For example, after uttering

the statement "What is your name?", the teacher motions for children to repeat the statement. Furthermore, the teacher extends immediate feedback to the children either through corrective repetition or some type of verbal or non-verbal praise (reinforcement).

In assisting children to pronounce sounds and formulate words and sentences, the teacher can use small group arrangements, or she can provide individual attention as needed. Two specific ESL techniques frequently used in the OLP approach, particularly in small group arrangements, are the "backward build-up" and the "chain dialogue." An example of the "backward build-up" is as follows:

Teacher: (The teacher motions to the students to listen.) She then utters the word "sister," and follows by motioning to the children to respond.

Students: The students respond by attempting to utter the word "sister."

Teacher: (The teacher motions to the students to listen.) She then models the sentence, "I have a sister." This is followed by motioning to the students to respond.

Beyond this initial activity, the teacher can follow with other combinations such as "Do you have a sister?", etc. It is apparent that the foregoing patterns provide the child with common vocabulary and statements, while he/she is developing facility in forming the structural components of the language.

The backward build-up can be effectively followed by the "chain dialogue." For example, the first student in a circular arrangement will ask the second student (left to right) "My name is-----, what is your name?" In turn, the second student will say "My name is-----, he/she then addresses the third student with the

question "What is your name?" This process flows very rapidly until all of the students have had an opportunity to talk and respond. During this activity, the teacher observes and notes any utterances requiring further modeling.

The "Stimulus-Response-Reinforcement Approach" has been critized for being overly structured and mechanistic. Furthermore, some teachers contend that the processes restrict the natural occurrence of oral expressions in terms of gestures, pauses, and voice tone. On the other hand, advocates of the approach propose that the structured format and sequenced patterns ensure appropriate and continuous progression in second language development. They suggest that it enables the learner to advance sequentially to higher levels of articulation without becoming unduly frustrated and discouraged. Finally, other proponents recommend the "S-R-R Oral Language Approach" in the early stages of oral language development, especially for students who have little or no proficiency in the second language.

The Integrated Concept-Language Development Approach

The "Integrated Concept-Language Development Approach" simply refers to an instructional plan which assists students to learn concepts concurrently with second language development. For example, a teacher may use flash cards to teach the different colors of the color spectrum, while he/she helps children in pronouncing the associated words. And in mathematics, the teacher may help children to identify and name numbers, geometrical configurations, etc. Needless to say, concept formation and language development can be simultaneously enhanced through the presentation of drawings, pictorials,

objects, puppets, coupled with related words and phrases.

The advantages of the foregoing approach are obvious. However, the principal shortcoming in using this method occurs when a teacher fails to maintain a proper balance between concept formation and language development. As an example, a teacher may become so engrossed in assisting children in concept formation and, therefore, forgets to provide time for language development activities. Conversely, a teacher may become overly involved in second language development and neglects activities related to concept formation. Teachers can check this tendency by noting particular language problems among children during concept-formation sessions; then they can follow-up by arranging special activities which focus on language development.

Undoubtedly, interactions that occur in concept formation between teacher and students also contribute to language development, because these interactions enable children to formulate words and phrases as they respond to oral and visual (conceptual) stimuli provided by the teachers. Whereas special language development activities may be arranged for specific language development purposes, the overall instructional scheme is, essentially, an integrated approach.

Simply sounding or writing words for increasing the vocabulary of children does not imply that they have internalized conceptual meanings. Words can be envisioned as mere representations of symbols that are transmitted and received. While certain words and concepts are learned by children as they interact spontaneously in a natural environment, formal instruction is needed for them to

gain indepth meanings of associated words and concepts. For example, the concept of lightning is understood at a particular level in terms of natural phenomena; however, the scientific meaning of lightning is usually learned through formal instruction. In this sense, the integrated process enables children to advance in the acquisition of several language communication skills, while it also provides them with ample opportunities to learn and explicate conceptual meanings in greater detail.

The Eclectic Approach

The "Eclectic Approach" merely allows flexibility for the teacher to select and apply different approaches in second language development. Logically, the teacher may utilize the "S-R-R Approach" with limited-English speakers or non-English proficiency students, particularly in the early stages of oral language development. To assure that sufficient attention is given to the particular linguistic needs of these students, the lessons and activities may be planned and organized in terms of specific and sequential language development objectives. Thus while the pictorials, audio aids, objects, etc., may be used as facilitating stimuli, the focus (in selected periods of the day) is in language development rather than concept formation. Moreover, it is highly desirable that language activities via the "S-R-R Approach" be limited to short durations, i.e., no longer than one-half hour. Furthermore, the duration of the sessions should be shorter for kindergarten and first grade children.

Some selected features of the "Natural Approach" can be advantageously included in the "Eclectic Approach." For example,

the classroom environment should be designed to include different types of manipulative objects, materials, pictorials, charts, games (puzzles, etc.), plants, insects, rodents and other stimuli of interest to children. Most importantly, this type of environment should be arranged to allow time during the day for children to explore, interact and choose their own learning activities. In this regard, the teacher plays a vital role in creating an interactive environment--in selecting and arranging objects and materials, in animating things, and in giving attention to individual children whenever needed.

The "Integrated Concepts-Language Development Approach" requires careful planning by the teacher, especially for the instructioanl sessions. The teacher must arrange content and activities to achieve a balanced integration of concept formation and language development. While the teacher plans activities for the acquisition of concepts and related cognitive processes (i.e., classifying, differentiating, analyzing, synthesizing, hypothesizing, and evaluating), she/he must provide opportunities for verbal interaction between teacher and students, as well as interaction between peers. And while language development may not be the specific target during cognitive activites, the observant teacher can note language problems that will require further attention during second-language development sessions. Otherwise, it is understood that language development occurs through teacher-pupil interaction, even when emphasis is placed on concept formation.

Conclusions

This paper offers a brief description of approaches in

second language development. All of the approaches contain components that are advantageous for limited-English speakers and non-English proficiency students, depending on the level of second language development among the students. Additionally, some approaches have particular advantages in combining concept formation with language development, while others present special advantages in focusing on the particular language needs of students at any given time.

The "Eclectic Approach" offers flexibility for teachers who prefer a non-structured instructional plan. However, it necessitates careful consideration to ascertain that selected features from the different approaches correspond closely in terms of objectives, content, sequence and progression.

In the final analysis, English-as-a-second language (ESL) strategies must prepare limited-English speakers and non-English proficiency students for more advanced second-language instruction. Obviously, the ultimate goal of English-language programs for limited-English proficiency students and non-English speakers is to develop their English communication skills to enable them to function spontaneously, with clarity and comprehension, in an English-based environment. However, this does not imply a transformation of the person into a monolingual English speaker, because this can occur only if the person discontinues to use the native language as one of his/her communication systems. In this regard, too, the "mainstreaming" of students from ESL programs and bilingual education programs into English-based classrooms does not suggest that bilingual speakers should discontinue using their

native language with other bilingual speakers. Finally, it is in reference to this philosophical perspective that bilingual educators accept ESL instruction as a viable component for advancing the education of limited-English proficiency pupils and non-English speaking students in this country.

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